

EBSA Workshop

18 October 2018

Colophon Seminar Room, Kirstenbosch

Interested persons are invited to attend a national workshop on Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) in South Africa on 18 October 2018, 9h00 - 16h00, at the Colophon Seminar Room, Centre for Biodiversity Conservation, Kirstenbosch.

The workshop follows up on an initial EBSA workshop held previously at the same venue (16 November 2016). The aims of this workshop will be to

- (1) Present progress on the national EBSA process, in particular draft revisions of descriptions and boundaries for current EBSAs, and identification, boundary delineation and draft descriptions of new potential EBSAs;
- (2) Present the proposed way forward for the next phase of the project, namely to assess vulnerabilities of areas meeting EBSA criteria;
- (3) Initial discussion on range of management options for EBSAs;
- (4) Provide an inclusive forum for expert and stakeholder input on the above.

If you would like to attend the workshop, please RSVP to Stephen Kirkman (skirkman@environment.gov.za), cc Stephen Holness (sholness@mandela.ac.za), with “EBSA workshop” as the subject line. A draft agenda and a discussion document shall be circulated closer to the time.

Background

EBSAs are areas of the oceans that have special ecological properties. EBSAs are identified and described under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) through a technical and scientific exercise on the basis of a set of seven scientific criteria. For South Africa, 18 areas meeting the EBSA criteria have been previously identified through CBD processes (including EBSAs wholly within the CBD and those that overlap with other countries or ABNJ). The descriptions of these EBSAs have been formally endorsed by the CBD Conference of the Parties (COP) in October 2014.

The German-funded project “Marine Spatial Management and Governance (MARISMA)” of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME) which has a duration of 5 years (08/2014 - 04/2020), is supporting the Benguela Current Commission (BCC), its three member states (South Africa, Namibia and Angola) and other key stakeholders in the marine management sector to reach the objectives of the Benguela Current Convention regarding enhanced sustainable management and governance of the BCLME’s marine biodiversity and natural resources. The main focus of the project is capacity development at various levels, to implement and institutionalize Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and to identify and describe the BCLME’s “Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs)”. The MARISMA project includes the development of management and governance strategies, policies as well as legal and institutional frameworks, which relate to and are conducive for EBSAs and MSP. It supports partners in implementing measures for their application and coming-into-force.

In terms of EBSAs, the project supports the continuation of the EBSA process in the BCC member states by focusing on the following:

- 1) Description and verification of areas meeting the EBSA criteria
- 2) Assessment of the vulnerabilities of areas meeting the EBSA criteria

The first step is to describe new EBSAs and/or revisit the existing EBSA descriptions to verify/add to them. The technical process of doing this has been by a consortium of researchers appointed in terms of the MARISMA project and led by Dr Stephen Holness of the Institute for Coastal and Marine Research, Nelson Mandela University. They have worked closely with national EBSA task teams and in South Africa have provided regular updates to, and received feedback from, the DEA-led National Marine Biodiversity Scientific Working Group. Most recently (July 2018), input on the process was provided by an international team of expert at a regional EBSA working group meeting held in Luanda, and comments and suggestions from that workshop shall be incorporated in time for the proposed national follow-up workshop on 18 October 2018.

On the basis of new/verified EBSA descriptions (once finalised), the next step will focus on assessing the EBSAs’ vulnerabilities in terms of pressures and threats posed to their special ecological or biological assets. Since EBSAs may require enhanced risk aversion in the management of human activities in those areas, management implications will be deduced on the basis of the assessed vulnerabilities. This information will be fed into the MSP process

in order to select and adopt EBSA management measures in the development and implementation of marine spatial management plans. The project therefore promotes the “move from maps to action” by translating the scientific EBSA information into management of those EBSAs within the national jurisdictions of the three BCC member states - which is a step further than “merely” describing areas that meet the EBSA criteria under the formal terms of the CBD.

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